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DEVELOPMENT

voluntarily achieved, the child feels he can prove that he has not been deprived of the organ, or of the power of pleasure, and that his genital itself is " good ", not " bad ". And if it is good, not bad, it is capable of giving help and pleasure to others as well as himself. The masturbatory act normally expresses this hope of giving and receiving love, and of creative potency, as well as the needed reassurance against the fears of revenge and castration.

Since, however, it is a magical reassurance within the child's own mind, having no relation to the world of outer reality, it is not secure. It has to be sought again. And where the act means to the child very marked defiance and aggression against the parents—the secret stealing of pleasure rather than the actual giving of love to other people—the need for reassurance arises again almost immediately.

Where masturbation is persistent and compulsive, it is because these anxieties arising from the aggressive elements in the act, the secret attack upon the parents to get pleasure that they do not give, are overwhelmingly strong. Such anxieties occur in a greater or less degree in all children, and the great majority of children (probably all) do, at some time or other, in some form or other, and in some degree or other, find masturbatory comfort and satisfaction, masturbation being the genital equivalent of what thumb-sucking is on the oral level.

It is, however, only in those children in whom these anxieties become very marked that the compulsive and persistent reassurance of the auto-erotic act is needed. Such a state may come about either (a) from internal causes, e.g. in those children who by constitution are very intolerant of any denial of satisfaction, or whose original aggression is unusually

strong ; or (*b*) from external factors, for example, an environment, (i) where the normal sublimations of primitive impulses are not possible, the child being denied normal satisfactions in tender love, in muscular play and the development of skill, in ordinary curiosity and external interests; (2) where he actually suffers some sadistic sexual experience; or (3) where, by their excessive reproaches or threats of severe punishment and castration, parents or educators have shown the child that they appreciate only the aggressive, destructive element in the masturbation, and have no sense of the element of love or reassurance, or attempt to re-create, that it also contains.